

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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USOECD

PASS LABOR FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY BURKHARDT, R. VAN
HELDEN AND J. METCALF

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, OECD
SUBJECT: WORKING PARTY ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, JUNE
28-29

1. SUMMARY - MEETING WAS HELD JUNE 28 AND 29 PRECEDED
BY CONSULTATIONS JUNE 27 WITH MEMBERS OF THE SECRETARIAT
AND KEY DELEGATIONS ON THE ISSUE OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP
AND A PROPOSAL BY THE SECRETARIAT FOR A SPECIAL MEETING
OF EXPERTS AND GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ON INCOMES
POLICY. U.S. DELEGATION WAS HEADED BY FRANCIS X.
BURKHARDT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR LABOR MANA-
GEMENT RELATIONS, RONALD VAN HELDEN, SPECIAL ASSISTANT
FOR LABOR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, DOL, JAMES P. METCALF,
DIRECTOR, OECD ACTIVITIES, DOL, AND MISSION LABOR AD-
VISER MARTIN FORRESTER. END SUMMARY.

2. MR. BURKHARDT WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN AT THE BEGINNING
OF THE MEETING. SEVERAL DELEGATIONS TOLD MISSION
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OFFICERS THAT BURKHARDT HAD PROVIDED EFFECTIVE LEADER-
SHIP BY KEEPING DISCUSSIONS TO THE POINT, AND BY ASKING
PROBING QUESTIONS OF DELEGATES.

3. MOST AGENDA ITEMS CENTERED ON AN EXCHANGE OF INFOR-
MATION ON TECHNICAL ISSUES. THE MOST INTERESTING DIS-
CUSSIONS WERE THOSE ON THE JAPANESE SYSTEM OF INDUSTRIAL

RELATIONS, AND A REPORT ON TRENDS IN JOB SECURITY PROVISIONS OF UNION CONTRACTS AND GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION. ON THE LATTER SUBJECT, THE OBVIOUS TREND TOWARD JOB SECURITY PROVISIONS IN LEGISLATION AND UNION CONTRACTS WAS EMPHASIZED, AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS TREND ON MANPOWER AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. DISCUSSIONS FOCUSSED ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY (E.G., EFFECTS ON MOBILITY, PRODUCTIVITY INCENTIVES, PROGRAMS TO EMPLOY YOUTH, WOMEN AND MINORITIES, ETC.). THE POINT WAS MADE THAT NEGOTIATED OR LEGISLATED JOB SECURITY PROVISIONS SUCH AS HIRING FREEZES, PERSONNEL TRANSFERS WITHIN ENTERPRISES, SHORTER WORKING TIME, ETC, ASSUMED THAT CURRENTLY HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS WOULD BE SHORT TERM. THUS, WE AGREED THAT SHOULD THESE LEVELS CONTINUE INTO MEDIUM TERM, EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS MUST SEEK ALTERNATIVE MEASURES .

4. THE MOST IMPORTANT AND POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME ISSUE WAS A SECRETARIAT PROPOSAL TO HOLD A CONFERENCE ON INCOMES POLICY NEXT YEAR. IT WAS CLERKED AFTER CHECKING WITH OTHER DELEGATIONS THAT THIS PROPOSAL WOULD RECEIVE STRONG SUPPORT FROM MANY DELEGATIONS AND VOCAL OPPOSITION FROM NONE. THE U.S. DELEGATION WAS CONCERNED THAT A MEETING AS PROPOSED COULD ISOLATE THE US ON THE QUESTION OF THE USEFULNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE

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EUROPEAN APPROACHES TO INCOMES POLICY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WAS POTENTIAL VALUE IN A MEETING OF EXPERTS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO REVIEW CASE STUDIES OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC REQUIREMENTS OF MEMBER NATIONS. THIS WOULD ALLOW EACH COUNTRY TO REVIEW AND EXPLAIN THEIR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS POLICIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS WHICH WOULD BROADEN THE DISCUSSION TO INCLUDE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS POLICIES OTHER THAN INCOMES POLICY PER SE, AND WOULD NOT REQUIRE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE USEFULNESS OF ANY ONE APPROACH. THIS CHANGE IN THE CONCEPT OF THE MEETING WON FAVOR WITH THE WORKING PARTY. IT WAS THEREFORE AGREED THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE HELD WITH THE ADMONITION TO THE SECRETARIAT THAT IT WAS INTENDED THAT THIS BE A PRACTICAL DISCUSSION USEFUL TO POLICY-MAKERS, AND THAT A FORMULA SHOULD BE FOUND TO ALLOW INPUT TO THE MEETING BY BIAC AND TUAC (PROBABLY BY ALLOWING COMMENTS BY EACH DURING CONSULTATIONS THE DAY BEFORE THE MEETING).

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